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FOR JAMES WRIGHT

Just down the road from this bar
 along the tracks of the railway cars
 is the place the poet James Wright
 called, appropriately, bareass beach.
 There you'd watch the river flow
 until, drunk or young or both,
 you'd strip and leap in eager flight
 from this failed valley's baleful reach,
 and maybe dream of swimming
 all the way down to the Mardi Gras,
 away from a place that once saw
 much better days. Or maybe dream
 of nothing more than easy death,
 giving yourself quietly over to
 the Ohio's cold, relentless breath.
 Believe me, it has been done.
 Even Martins Ferry's favorite son
 couldn't really flee his roots.
 Wright wrote of us living back here
 in New York, abroad in Rome,
 in sorrow, joy, in love or fear,
 like Hemingway in Paris writing
 "Up in Michigan." Reap the fruits,
 though bittersweet. No one escapes home.